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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUKAN (Slovakia)

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AGENDA ITEM 109: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (A/48/24, A/48/56-E/1993/6, A/48/207, A/48/289, A/48/291, A/48/293, A/48/462, A/48/476, A/48/484; E/1993/50/Rev.1; A/C.3/48/L.2, L.3, L.4)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to begin its consideration of agenda item 109 and drew its attention to the documentation under that item. He noted that the three draft resolutions which the Economic and Social Council had recommended to the General Assembly for adoption were available in documents A/C.3/48/L.2, L.3 and L.4. He also recalled that the General Assembly, at its 112th plenary meeting of the forty-seventh session on 20 September 1993, had adopted a draft resolution entitled "International Year of the Family", which had been recommended to it by the Economic and Social Council. That resolution (A/RES/47/237) contained several provisions which called for immediate action, in particular, preparations for the plenary meeting to be held in early December to launch the Year. For details, he referred delegations to document A/47/1011.

2. Mr. BAUDOT (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and Coordinator of the World Summit for Social Development), introducing agenda item 109, pointed out that social development was a difficult concept on account of the diversity of social systems, which were rooted in different historical and cultural traditions. Yet, much had been achieved, particularly through the Committee, in helping to clarify concepts, define issues, raise awareness of the problems, develop standards and point the way to action by countries singly or collectively.

3. Progress had been made in changing attitudes and promoting greater understanding, particularly with regard to older persons and to persons with disabilities. That progress, however, had been of limited scope, since the challenges in that field could never be completely overcome.

4. With regard to disability, the Committee was expected at its current session to consider a draft resolution entitled "Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities", recommended by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of a draft submitted to the Council by the Commission for Social Development, at the latter's most recent Vienna session in February. He wished to record the Secretariat's appreciation to those Governments which, through their generous contributions, had made it possible for an ad hoc open-ended working group to hold a series of meetings at which the Rules in question had been elaborated. He hoped that those Rules could be adopted at the Committee's current session.

5. The Third Committee should also consider the question of the long-term strategy for the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the year 2000 and beyond. There had been some delay in the elaboration of that strategy, owing to some differences of emphasis among Member States regarding the sequence of steps in the strategy. The progress achieved so far had been summarized in the informal background information note which had been circulated to members of the Committee. That note contained the framework

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for a long-term strategy. It took into account the results of the meeting of experts held at Vancouver, the views that had been expressed since then by governments, and other developments, as stipulated in paragraph 2 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/20. The Secretariat invited Member States to continue to communicate their views on the strategy and to do so if possible before the end of the year.

6. Although the Secretariat had not submitted a report relating to ageing in 1993, he nevertheless wished to draw the Committee's attention to the third review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing which had been completed earlier that year. The Secretariat intended to make the findings available later in greater detail and in a suitable form.

7. Likewise, no specific report had been submitted during the year to the Third Committee on the question of youth. However, in keeping with earlier decisions of the Assembly and the guidelines of the Commission for Social Development and of ECOSOC, the Secretariat was proceeding with the elaboration of its draft of the world programme of action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond, which the Committee would take up at subsequent sessions, especially in 1995.

8. He wished to inform members of the Committee of the new arrangements made in the context of the reorganization of the Secretariat. Activities previously carried out by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna had been relocated to New York and entrusted to a division, tentatively called Division for Social Policy and Development, which was part of the new Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. However, activities under the crime prevention and criminal justice programme would remain in Vienna. The secretariat for the International Year of the Family, while also part of the new Department, would remain in Vienna until the end of 1994.

9. No decisions had yet been taken regarding the internal structure of the new Division for Social Policy and Development. The Secretariat should take into account, inter alia, the need to make the best use of the resources made available by the General Assembly, to ensure flexibility in the use of those resources, and to avoid fragmentation of activities.

10. Turning to the preparations for the World Summit for Social Development, he recalled that the Preparatory Committee had held its organizational session in April 1993 and that its report (A/48/24) was before the Committee. At that session, the Preparatory Committee had adopted a procedure for the accreditation of non-governmental organizations to the World Summit and its preparatory meetings. The Preparatory Committee had also stressed during the meeting the importance of national contributions to the preparatory arrangements for the Summit and had made suggestions about the various types of contributions which Governments could make. Finally, the Preparatory Committee had accepted with appreciation the offers of the Governments of the Netherlands and Sweden to host and finance two meetings of experts focused on the core issues of the Summit. Those two meetings had been held. The first, on social integration, had been held at The Hague from 27 September to 1 October 1993, and the second, on productive employment, had been held at Stockholm from 4 to 8 October. The

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reports of those meetings would be transmitted to the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session in early 1994. The discussions at those meetings had been extremely useful.

11. Speaking on behalf of Mr. Sokalski, the Coordinator for the International Year of the Family introduced the salient points of the Secretary-General's report on the Year, and noted that the General Assembly had decided at its resumed forty-seventh session to meet in plenary on 7 December in order to formally launch the International Year of the Family. That event would be followed by other celebrations, including one in Paris, during the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and one in Malta at the NGO Forum. The Secretariat had already been informed that 120 countries planned to organize a variety of events as part of the Year and that 100 countries had established national coordinating mechanisms. Four regional preparatory meetings had been held at Tunis, Valleta, Beijing and Cartagena. He expressed the Secretariat's appreciation to the Governments that had hosted the meetings. The reports of those meetings were available to the Committee. The preparations for the International Year of the Family had been a truly cooperative effort as demonstrated by the support from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations which, while approaching the question of the family from different perspectives, all pursued the same purpose of promoting better understanding and enlightened policy.

12. Mr. USWATTE-ARATCHI (Chief, Development Analysis Branch, Macroeconomic and Social Policy Analysis Division, Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis) said that contrary to oft-repeated assertions, progress had been made in social development in both developed and developing countries since the first Report on the World Social Situation was published in 1952.

13. In 64 developing countries for which data was available in 1960, the child mortality rate had been about 200 per 1000 live births. In 1985, 25 years later, the comparable figure had been only 80 per 1000. Child mortality had fallen on the average by 3 per cent per year; that decline had been somewhat faster in Latin America and Asia than in Africa. However, improvements in social conditions had occurred even in countries where per capita income had fallen. Infant mortality had not risen in any of those countries and in 22 of them it had even declined. Among them was Jamaica. In 14 countries where per capita GNP had risen by less than 1 per cent per annum between 1985 and 1989, infant mortality had decreased over the same period. Trinidad and Tobago was one of those countries. Of course, in countries with economies in transition there had been a drastic reduction in incomes and a deterioration in social conditions although it was still difficult to accurately assess the situation because the reliability of the statistical data under previous regimes was questionable.

14. On the other hand, there were two regions of the world where, while the social situation was not hopeless, it still posed substantial problems whether it be in infant mortality, malnutrition or illiteracy. Those regions were sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, the infant mortality rate exceeded 200 per 1000 live births and in South Asia 125 per 1,000 births. However, the most serious malnutrition problems were in South Asia. In

sub-Saharan Africa, only in Mauritania, Niger and the United Republic of Tanzania was the situation as serious as in Pakistan. According to UNESCO estimates, illiteracy in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia was virtually the same at 53 to 54 per cent of the population. However, if India sustained its current rate of economic growth, the number of people in poverty in South Asia should go down considerably. Sustained growth in China would reduce that figure even further.

15. Referring to the important role played by the State, he noted that a stronger orientation towards the market is the surest path to faster growth in productivity, rising incomes and sustained economic development was not a universally applicable principle. As the authors of the World Development Report 1991 had noted, many sorts of government intervention are essential if economies are to achieve their full potential. Areas where the State must intervene included the maintenance of law and order, the provision of public services, the development of human resources, construction and repair of physical infrastructure and protection of the environment. The deterioration in social conditions was particularly striking in countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique and now Somalia where Governments had failed to intervene. In contrast, because of the publicity they had enjoyed, mention should be made of the current series of proposals for health care reform recently introduced by the United States administration.

16. The need for government intervention was admittedly paradoxical. Governments in developing and developed countries were often inefficient, often staffed with poorly trained and sometimes corrupt personnel, always short of resources and often wasteful. While those factors must be borne in mind, it must also be acknowledged that the same level of efficiency that prevailed in a developed society where competition was the rule, there was a free press and the government was held accountable could not be achieved by societies where none of those features were present. In that area, one must make allowances.

17. The international community would have to consider those questions when it examined the three key issues of the World Summit for Social Development, namely, poverty, social integration and productive employment. The international community must take into account not only the tremendous achievements of the past 30 years but also the magnitude of the problems ahead. It must also identify the areas where the problems were more severe and where government intervention was required simply because there were either no markets or the markets were unstable. It was precisely because of his insights into those issues that Professor Douglas North had been a joint recipient of the 1993 Nobel Prize in Economics.

18. Miss FOSTIER (Belgium) speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States said that the main objective of the United Nations at its inception was the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. With the end of the cold war and the expansion of democracy, the international community had rediscovered the importance of social development tailored to the new socio-political climate. Genuine international cooperation must reflect the close ties between peace, stability, democracy, respect for human rights, economic development and social progress.

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19. States must apply social and economic policies to work out lasting solutions to such problems as poverty, social exclusion and unemployment. Social development must focus on the individual, particularly the most disadvantaged groups, and required the implementation in a spirit of justice and social integration of efficient measures, particularly in the spheres of health care, education and training. The World Summit for Social Development to be held at Copenhagen in 1995 would be devoted, among other things, to such issues. The interrelationship between the social function of the State, the reaction of the market to social needs and the imperatives of sustainable development compelled States to think their socio-economic policies, as illustrated by the Secretary-General's Report on the World Social Situation 1993 which had been analysing that trend since the 1980s.

20. At the World Conference on Human Rights, the European Community had supported the reaffirmation of the rights to development as set forth in the Vienna Declaration. It fully endorsed the notion that lack of development could not justify the abridgement of internationally recognized human rights. States should give priority, at the national and international levels, to promoting democracy, development and respect for human rights. In the elaboration of their policies, the European Community and its member States took into consideration the interdependence of those three components.

21. The European Community attached great importance to the social, economic, cultural and human dimensions of development. Social factors were crucial. Eleven member States of the Community had therefore adopted the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers, as well as the Protocol for Social Policy, which was annexed to the Treaty on European Union. The next phase of economic and political development in Europe would focus on the protection of jobs, the improvement of living and working conditions, and social welfare. At the Copenhagen meeting of the European Council, the Community had announced its determination to restore confidence, so as to re-establish sustainable growth, strengthen the competitive edge of European industry, and cut unemployment.

22. Faced with a slow-down in world economic growth, the European Community would attempt to promote not only economic recovery in Europe, but also a coordinated international approach to the problem.

23. European policy stressed partnership and cooperation, not only among Governments, but also among Governments, industry, trade unions and non-governmental organizations, as well as close collaboration with the agencies and bodies of the United Nations and the international financial institutions. The Community's programmes of cooperation with the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group, under the Lomé Convention, had received increasing attention, especially in the areas of health and education. Such cooperation also extended to the countries of the Mediterranean, as well as to those of Asia and Latin America.

24. The member States of the European Community sought to establish balanced cooperative relationships with developing countries in a spirit of solidarity. The development policy of the European Community, as set out in the Treaty on European Union, envisaged the promotion of sustainable economic and social

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development, including the struggle against poverty in developing countries. As the World Conference on Human Rights had emphasized, extreme poverty and social exclusion constituted a violation of human dignity. It was thus crucial, as the Human Development Report 1993 indicated, for States to promote the participation of the poorest members of society in their decision-making. Generally speaking, action must be taken to counter the marginalization of groups, with special emphasis on women, who played a catalytic role in social development.

25. The convening of the World Summit for Social Development had garnered the support of the international community. At the time of the high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council in 1993, the member States of the European Community had already defined their positions and approach with regard to the Summit's three themes: social integration, particularly of the more disadvantaged groups; reduction of poverty; and expansion of productive employment.

26. The World Summit should make it possible to identify innovative approaches that would enable leaders to deal with social tensions and give new impetus to social policy, in the industrialized countries, which must adapt to new realities, in the Central and Eastern European countries, which were attempting to rehabilitate their economic and social systems, and in the developing countries, which must create conditions conducive to economic growth and social progress. Those fundamental questions had been considered in depth by experts from all regions of the world, at the meetings in the Netherlands and Sweden. The experts' reports would be submitted to the Preparatory Committee for the Summit, which would hold its first substantive discussion in early 1994. The European Community planned to take part in that discussion in a constructive manner. In that context, it welcomed the frame of reference defined by the Commission for Social Development and took note of the work of the third Conference of European Ministers responsible for social affairs, which had taken place in Bratislava in June 1993.

27. As a mainstay of international cooperation in the social sector, the United Nations system should redefine its role in that regard through its existing institutions. The United Nations should cooperate more closely with its specialized agencies as well as with the Bretton Woods institutions. ILO, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA should contribute to both the preparations for and the follow-up to the Summit. Given its mandate and its tripartite structure, ILO in particular had a unique role to play, and its international standards should be accorded increased attention.

28. Over the years the United Nations had adopted programmes and plans of action for the protection, promotion and integration of vulnerable groups: older persons, disabled persons, young people and women. Those initiatives should work towards creating conditions enabling the groups in question to better defend their interests.

29. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly had examined the progress made during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, and in particular since the adoption in 1982 of the World Programme of Action. Activities in follow-up to the Decade and the idea of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond were of interest to the European Community.

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Recognizing the progress made so far as well as the many remaining obstacles, the member States of the Community envisaged a policy which would focus on concrete action with emphasis on the prevention of disabilities, rehabilitation and the social integration of disabled persons. Thus, the European Community's Helios II programme covered numerous areas, such as training, support for elderly disabled persons and access to employment. In that context, the European Community expressed its unqualified support for the draft Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

30. With regard to the elderly, an active, practical policy should be adopted. To integrate the elderly better and to raise awareness of their plight, the European Community had designated 1993 as the European Year of the Elderly and of Intergenerational Solidarity. For its part, the United Nations had adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons and the Proclamation on Ageing, and had designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. Furthermore, the problems posed by the ageing of the population as a whole would be examined at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994.

31. Young people merited special consideration. No effort should be spared in helping them meet the many challenges posed by society as well as by the effects of the socio-economic situation. The European Community was especially disturbed by the situation of children in armed conflicts and by the tragic, appalling plight of "street children". With regard to the latter, the European Community and its member States intended, during the current session of the General Assembly, to urge Governments to intervene as a matter of urgency so as to ensure their protection.

32. At the current session, the United Nations was about to proclaim 1994 as the International Year of the Family. The member States of the European Community had worked actively in the preparations for the Year, which would focus above all on the idea of change and evolution in societies. She drew attention, inter alia, to the important question of child care to help parents reconcile their professional, family and educational responsibilities.

33. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that the smooth functioning of United Nations services dealing with social issues would be assured, after the transfer from Vienna to New York, and strengthened through improved United Nations methods of work, effectiveness and coherence in the social field.

34. Mrs. CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) referred to the aspect of social development having to do with the development of human resources on the African continent.

35. Bearing in mind that the priority in that connection had to be given to the sectors of education, health and food supply, the results obtained has been very unequal despite commendable efforts made in Africa.

36. That disappointing assessment could be ascribed to the economic difficulties being experienced by the African countries since 1985. There was a relatively recent time - during the 1960s and 1970s - when African countries had contributed to the upsurge of the world economy and been able, thanks to their export revenues, to invest heavily in infrastructure development, health and

(Mrs. Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

education, thus making unprecedented social advances. Yet currently the situation was entirely different. Now the African Governments were in a difficult economic position, and in most cases unable to meet the social welfare needs of their populations for lack of funds. Yet it was a truism that education, access to contraception and primary health care, sanitation measures, environmental preservation and the integration of vulnerable persons, all elements indispensable to the development of human resources, required considerable expenditure.

37. In Côte d'Ivoire, from 1960 to 1980, social investment had represented more than 80 per cent of the budget. Because of the decline in export revenues, however, the country had had to cut back considerably on social expenditure and to do so within the framework of a structural adjustment policy entailing net transfers to the North of meagre resources that could usefully have been invested in the social area. In that connection, a monetary and financial expert had recently written that for several years the World Bank had been receiving more from Africa than it was lending and that it had virtually ceased stepping in to help the franc zone countries. Her delegation wondered how, under those conditions, one could hope to reverse the unemployment of young people, overcome poverty, ensure the availability of health care for all, and allow universal access to basic education.

38. It should be noted that thus far the developed countries had not taken action in Africa except "in cases of emergency" and her delegation wondered if one must wait until extreme indebtedness and the dwindling away of resources allocated to Africa made the entire continent a "case of humanitarian emergency" before it finally attracted interest.

39. Moreover, it should be noted that although the anti-poverty programmes were, on paper, extremely generous, the resources actually made available to United Nations agencies under such programmes rarely saw the light. Furthermore, African countries had not yet benefited from any of the so-called peace dividends which the end of the cold war was supposed to generate, and must instead content themselves with studies, certainly very enlightening ones, on guidelines and measures for emerging from underdevelopment and promoting social development. Her delegation believed that it was time for such studies, conducted at great expense, to be converted into action, and she hoped that the World Summit for Social Development to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995 would go beyond statements of principle and pious hopes to tackle specific, long-term activities.

40. Mrs. PETERSON (United States of America) reaffirmed the importance her country attached to social development. She recalled that in his address to the General Assembly the previous month, President Clinton had expressed hope for a day when the opinions and energies of every person would be given full expression.

41. Thus her delegation had listened with interest to the representative of the Secretariat as he described how social development issues would be dealt with now that the units responsible for them had returned to New York. She looked forward to receiving more information on the subject over the next several days.

(Mrs. Peterson, United States)

42. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, there was not a moment to lose in laying the foundation for the future. In 1992, the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council had begun preparations for the World Summit for Social Development to be held in 1995. In that connection, her delegation had in Geneva urged the adoption of policies that encouraged decentralization, grass-roots organizations and free trade unions, respect for human rights, greater transparency in public administration, and the rule of law. It had spoken of that as an "agenda for people".

43. The United Nations had traditionally focused on the most vulnerable groups in society - women, children and young people, persons with disabilities, and the aged - who were too often caught in a web of social and economic deprivation. The Summit would provide the opportunity to take a comprehensive approach to social development encompassing all those concerns. It would therefore have to focus on the reduction of poverty, the universalization of education, the provision of adequate health care, the right to family planning and birth spacing, and the enfranchisement of those locked out of political participation. The United States looked forward to the preparations for the Summit that would begin in January 1994, in which it intended to participate fully.

44. Her delegation was convinced that achieving the goals set out in the various resolutions before the Committee dealing with disabled persons would help millions with disabilities to achieve independence and lead active and productive lives. One such draft resolution on Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which was the result of two years of work, set out guidelines for disabled persons, their families, organizations representing them, and government leaders, on the provision of services to the disabled in order to encourage all of them to participate in society. The draft resolution provided for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to further the effective implementation of the Standard Rules. The Secretariat was asked to submit a statement of financial implications on the establishment of that mechanism, which her delegation hoped would be provided without delay.

45. The United Nations must work actively to promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities not only among States Members but within United Nations agencies; the draft resolution currently being drafted would no doubt contribute much to the realization of that goal.

46. She drew attention to the International Year of the Family to be celebrated in 1994, which would make the public more aware of the decisive role played by the family in the development of society.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.